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## End Matter

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word about practicing law without being a member of the Bar, although years later lawyer friends of mine mentioned that point. I thanked him most sincerely and, shouldering my knapsack, turned toward the waterfront, only to be apprehended by one of those fellows wearing a blue suit and a visored cap.

"Where you going, Bud?"

"Vinalhaven."

"You can't go there tonight."

"I know. But I can get aboard that little steamer and sleep on deck next to the funnel. It's cozy warm there."

"No. You're going to come with me," he said, and calmly taking my arm, walked me off to the Rockland jail where I was supplied with a bunk in a cell. "What time do you want to be off in the morning?"

"Five o'clock," I said.

"You'll be called," he told me. And he was right.

Back on the island, I was greeted happily by my fishermen friends, and after long, uninformed talks about what to do next, I returned to the mainland and to the Knox County Courthouse, where I was permitted to read corporation charters and take notes. I focused on a legal document founding a farmers' cooperative, and, with pages of handwritten legalese in my possession, returned to Vinalhaven, to Birger Magnuson's parlor, and to my typewriter. (Yes, I had lugged a portable typewriter with me.)

I drew up many paragraphs suited to the legal form that kind and generous Rockland lawyer had given me, and at a meeting with the score or more interested lobstercatchers I attained agreement on certain principles and even on details. The meeting determined several issues: 1) the one-member, one-vote principle would be retained; 2) stock would have a par value of ten dollars; 3) the cooperative would buy and market lobsters for members only; 4) any licensed lobstercatcher would be eligible for membership; 5) the stock would yield, when it could, a modest dividend (in practice, no more than the interest on a note); 6) the co-op would buy lobsters and sell gear at

going market prices; 7) any net gain from the sale of lobsters would be distributed periodically to the members in exact proportion to the dollar-amount each had sold to the cooperative; 8) any net gain from the sale of equipment to members would be distributed to those members in exact proportion to the amount of their purchases; and 9) any net gain from the sale of equipment to non-members would revert to an educational or reserve fund.

The document was ratified, signed, notarized — whatever — and sent off to the attorney general of the state, who, or perhaps whose assistant, made two minor corrections and accepted the thing as a legal reality.

At that meeting only one member of the initial organizing group voted against the document and demanded return of the fee he paid to the buying club. The treasurer promptly produced ten dollars and fifty cents. The withdrawing member, who sounded none too rational (he seemed full of ethanol), protested the fifty cents, insisting it was not owed to him. The treasurer explained that it was, since the value of his share in the organization had grown by that amount in the past weeks. Confused, shaking his head, the man left the hall with the ten-fifty, looking a bit embarrassed. He had supplied an excellent bit of local publicity for the co-op.

By this time rumors were all over town: "Yeah, you fellows sign up with that man if you want, but three weeks from now your bunch will get a bill for \$600. See if you don't!" "What does that man get out of this anyhow? I wouldn't trust him for a minute. You ever seen him handle a deck of cards?" (I had sat in on a few rounds of poker.) On Main Street, some of the youngsters were calling me "Dynamite," and the local lobster dealers had lowered prices on gear. Some of them were even selling flour (of all things!) at a cut rate.

So the Vinalhaven Lobstermen's Co-operative was launched; it acquired a wharf, a lobster car, and a shed, relying on volunteer members at first to run the place. The organization entered the risky business of marketing that gourmet product, live lobster.

At this point in the narrative, I disappeared from the scene, going off to manage a health co-op in Maryland. I returned to Maine later, with help from a branch of the co-op movement, and tried to organize other fishermen's cooperatives on the Maine coast, but without success.

The Vinalhaven Lobstermen's Co-operative lasted several years and then went out of business. Precisely why, I do not know, although I suspect its closing was the result of inadequate management at the level of the board of directors. What is interesting, though, is the effect its existence had on other coastal communities — at least I believe it was the co-op's effect. Rumor works persuasively, even if not accurately, and much better than an uninvited organizer, or perhaps even an invited one. Word drifted from fisherman to fisherman; the idea of organizing and working together spread, and within a few years there was a lobstercatchers' cooperative at the island town of Stonington, about twenty miles northeast of Vinalhaven; then, one at Swans Island. Before long there were others, at Jonesport, at Winter Harbor, at Owl's Head, at Boothbay Harbor, and at least some of them have matured into stable organizations since then. Indeed, I heard recently that there is again a lobsterfishermen's cooperative at Vinalhaven.

Long may they, and their cooperative notions, endure.

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**CONTRIBUTORS**

- Karen Bowden
- Joyce Butler
- Richard M. Candee
- Charles E. Clark
- Dorsey R. Kleitz
- James S. Leamon
- Stephen A. Marini
- Richard Moss
- Carolyn Parsons
- David C. Smith
- Alan S. Taylor
- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich
- David H. Watters

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